THE Reconstructionist

Volume XI. May 18, 1945 Sivan 6, 5705 No. 7

EDITORIALS
- *The Religious Significance of V-E Day*
- *How to Reconstruct the United Jewish Appeal*
- *A Disease and Its Cure*
- *Jewish Music Week*

GOD AND MAN
By Leo Trepp

RITUAL IN THE JEWISH HOME
By Jack J. Cohen

THE VOICE UNHEARD AT YALTA (Poem)
By Frieda C. Hyman

BOOK NOTES
By Sidney Morgenbesser

REALITIES AND VALUES

CORRESPONDENCE

Dedicated to the advancement of Judaism as a religious civilization, to the upbuilding of Israel's ancient homeland, and to the furtherance of universal freedom, justice and peace.

the Reconstructionist

is published bi-weekly for twenty consecutive issues, starting in October, by the Jewish Reconstructionist Foundation, Inc., 15 West 86th Street, New York 24, N. Y. Subscription $2.00 per year; 10c per copy; foreign 25c extra; membership in the Foundation, $5.00 per year, including subscription to *The Reconstructionist*. Reentered as second class matter October 3, 1935, at the Post Office at New York, N. Y., under the Act of March 3, 1879.

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THE

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EDITORIALS

THE RELIGIOUS SIGNIFICANCE OF V-E DAY

PRESIDENT Truman, in announcing V-E Day for celebrating the unconditional surrender of Germany, summoned the nation to prayer. And prayer seems indeed the most appropriate expression of the sentiments which the day evokes. We cannot think of what the occasion means without sensing how our personal lives receive their direction from a current of life that transcends them. We feel ourselves a part of history and yearn to understand the goals toward the attainment of which our actions tend. Our ordinary preoccupation with self-centered aims is suspended on such a day, and we have a vision, however dim, of higher purposes to which our lives should be directed—the service of our country, our people, democracy, mankind. We seek an interpretation of the significance of our struggles, sufferings and triumphs. We hope thereby to salvage from the swirling flood of events something of abiding value.

In that quest, we are guided and inspired by the great prophets of Israel. It is they who taught mankind to perceive the "finger of God" in history. From the catastrophic wars of their day, they derived a deep faith in the reality of God's law of justice. Inscrutable though God's dispensations are, inexplicable as is the uneven distribution of joy and suffering among men, two truths stood out clear to their vision: that human sin inevitably leads to calamity and that the forces of evil eventually bring about their own destruction.

Both these thoughts are borne out by the events of our day. The reports of German atrocities that have come to us from the front are so revolting that it is hard for decent people to believe them. That they are nevertheless true is all the more significant. They show clearly that the ultimate source of aggressive war lies in the depravity of men when they ignore the divine law of righteousness and worship power for its own sake. Those atrocities were not mere incidents; they were the ultimate expression of what is inherent in all wars of aggression, a ruthless betrayal of the human spirit, a sacrilegious defilement of the image of God in man.

But a people that so sins eventually destroys itself. When the prophets witnessed the swift advance of the armies of bloodthirsty empires, they knew that those powers, by the very momentum of their massed assaults, would hurl themselves into the abyss. Nations goaded by lust for conquest are like machines with-

out breaks. And so it has been with Germany. Once it was launched on its career of aggression, it could not stop until it was hurtled to its own destruction.

Moral factors were involved both in the initial successes of Germany and in her final defeat. Because the nations she sought to conquer were all bent on selfish salvation, she was able to attack them one by one. They were paying the price of their own moral insensitivity, which had deterred them from interfering in the "internal problems" of Germany when Nazi depravity first manifested itself in the persecution of Jews, pacifists and liberals. But when German aggression became more immediately menacing to the other nations, it recalled them to their senses. They awoke to the need of unity and cooperation among civilized peoples. They mobilized and pooled together all their resources. From that time on, the doom of Germany, which has now overtaken it, was sealed.

But the Prophets taught not only the reality of divine retribution; they also taught the reality of divine redemption. That is expressed in their repeated admonitions to repentance. As physical pain is a danger signal indicating where the health of the individual is menaced, so social calamity is a danger signal that warns us where the life of society is imperilled. The suffering caused by the war has redemptive power if it leads us to discover and remove the causes of war.

The war has taught us that this world in which we live is "one world" not only in the economic interdependence of all peoples but in their moral interdependence. Deep moral corruption in one part of the world is bound to have tragic consequences for all other parts. A selfish isolationism which permits us to witness a wrong perpetrated against any people anywhere, without doing our utmost to prevent it, is sin. The Ten Commandments must apply "east of Suez" as well as west of it; they must govern our relations to people of black, red or yellow skin as well as to those of white. The implementation of this purpose is the form that our repentance should take. Through it we can experience that sense of restored harmony with the divine purpose of life which is what we mean by atonement.

Divine retribution, divine redemption—both are symbolized for us by current events; the former by the surrender of the German army in General Eisenhower's headquarters in Reims, the latter by the Security Conference in session at San Francisco. The prayers inspired by V-E Day must include an earnest plea for the success of the Conference. It is a God-given opportunity to build a new structure of human civilization, one that shall express the spiritual unity of man. It can help realize the goal of prophetic idealism "to perfect the world under the kingdom of the Almighty." God grant that it live up to its possibilities!

HOW TO RECONSTITUTE THE UNITED JEWISH APPEAL

WE Jews, when confronted as individuals with serious problems, are generally intelligent enough to seek expert opinion on their solution. If we suffer from physical ills, we consult a physician for a cure, not a lawyer, accountant or engineer. But when we Jews are confronted with serious communal problems, we do not act with the same degree of intelligence. We entrust their solution to people who have no special knowledge of the facts and who prescribe remedies on the basis of ideological prejudices or sentimental hunches. And if different organizations propose conflicting solutions of the problem, the effort is made to resolve their

differences not by submitting to the counsel of persons qualified to investigate and evaluate the facts, but by resort to arbitration, bargaining and compromise. It is as though two physicians who disagreed in their diagnosis were to settle their differences by having a lawyer devise a compromise treatment which would apply some of the remedies proposed by each of them. That would save the "face" of the physicians but it might kill the patient.

This unsatisfactory approach to communal problems is evident in the proposals for settling the present conflict between the Joint Distribution Committee and the United Palestine Appeal. The U.P.A. proposes "unconditional arbitration" of the dispute; the J.D.C. replies by suggesting "four alternative proposals," of which none, however, involves any considerable departure from the status quo.

Were we to remove from the discussion all extraneous questions, we would be left with the following real issues: 1) What is the nature and extent of Jewish need? 2) What are our available and potential resources to meet that need? 3) What funds and services will be required to meet that need realistically and satisfactorily?

It is deplorable that nowhere can one find, in a single brochure, specific answers to these three basic questions. In no single report and in no single source book have these three questions been analyzed and conclusively dealt with. On the contrary, we are in a fog on the facts and we wander about in a maze of conflicting ideologies and contentions. To tolerate this condition is a disservice to the Jews of this country and an inexcusable injustice to the millions of Jews in other lands who look to us for immediate and intelligent helpfulness.

A new approach to the problem is clearly necessary. To urge the U.P.A. to perpetuate the status quo as suggested by the J.D.C. is neither reasonable nor fair. The original apportionment between the J.D.C. and U.P.A. was based primarily on the proportions of the amounts which the two funds, when operating separately, had been able to raise from the Jewish community. It had no necessary relation to the relative value or importance of the respective tasks performed by the two organizations. To perpetuate the status quo is, therefore, to perpetuate an irrational and arbitrary decision not based on actual need.

But neither does the U.P.A. proposal of unconditional arbitration afford a satisfactory approach to the problem. People resort to arbitration when two contending parties take definite and apparently irreconcilable positions on a specific issue. "Neutral" arbitrators are then called in to negotiate and settle the differences. They seek, through compromise on a *quid pro quo* basis, to arrive at some middle position, which the contenders must accept with as good grace as they can. But the position arrived at is a result of the pressure exerted by influential groups; it is almost wholly irrelevant to the real issues as we have defined them. This is a political approach to a problem that should be approached scientifically. Our Sages, commenting on the words of the Psalmist: "Happy is he who has regard for the poor," call attention to the fact that it is not enough to *give* to the poor; one must give *with due "regard" for his needs.* The trouble with the arbitration method of determining allotment of funds for benevolent purposes is that it does not conform to this traditional criterion.

As a better approach to the problem we offer the following program: 1) an immediate decison by the J.D.C. and the U.P.A. to engage in a joint drive;

2) the appointment by the U.P.A. and the J.D.C. of three trustees each, these six to elect three others at-large, who have held no position of responsibility in either movement; 3) these nine trustees to set up a U.J.A. Trust Fund, to which all contributions to the U.J.A. would be transmitted; and 4) the immediate appointment of a Commission on Overseas Needs, consisting of such men as Salo Baron, Felix Cohen, Mordecai Ezekiel, Leo Gershay, Selig Hecht, Oscar I. Janowski, Kurt Lewin, Selig Perlman, Samuel Rosenman, and Joseph Zubin. This Commission would be authorized to prepare reports and programs on the basis of facts, to engage expert personnel as required, and to examine all correspondence, documents, files, records, reports in the possession of the J.D.C. and the U.P.A.

Will American Jewry this time display the intelligence that the situation calls for, and insist on a solution along these lines? Hundreds of thousands of Jews "over there," weary and sick in body and spirit, would, if they knew the situation "over here," pray most fervently that the answer be a powerful and resounding: "yes."

A DISEASE AND ITS CURE

ANOTHER Reform congregation, this time in Louisiana, has issued a broadside against Zionism and has counseled a return to the Pittsburgh Platform, classic statement of Reform Judaism in America. It is possible that the tendency illustrated here may grow to some extent, and other Reform congregations may join this and the two congregations previously on record. This may lead to the formation, within the Union of American Hebrew Congregations, of an anti-Zionist bloc which adopts the principles of the American Council for Judaism.

We are not disposed here to view this tendency with alarm, since it is not likely to prove dangerous so far as numbers are concerned. Nor is it our purpose to examine again the Pittsburgh Platform, which is now adjudged arid and Jewishly unproductive by Reform Jewry itself. But it is well, nevertheless, to be aware of the genesis of this tendency, to know what has produced it. The force behind it is fear.

The philosophy of Judaism that denies Jewish nationality and affirms that Jews constitute only a religious community had its origin with the beginning of the emancipation of Jews from the medieval ghetto. The assumption was that, if Jews were to enjoy full civil and political rights, they would have to pay for them —pay for them by giving up the Jewish cultural heritage, the Hebrew language, the yearning for national restoration in Eretz Yisrael, Jewish folkways and most of what was distinctive in Jewish ritual. What would remain was a collection of disembodied ethical and theological affirmations. Jews would thus gain the approbation of their neighbors in the lands of their birth or adoption, and be granted the rights enjoyed by others.

It is no accident that the emergence of a tendency to revive that way of thought today in America comes precisely when the Zionist movement is becoming more articulate, and precisely when it is on the threshold of achievement of a Jewish Commonwealth, autonomous and democratic. The tendency to which we have been referring is a desperate, last-ditch attempt to combat Zionism, an attempt born in the desperation of fear. The fear is that the establishment of a Jewish Commonwealth would undermine the position of Jews as free men in countries outside Eretz Yisrael. As the Louisiana congregation puts it, "The confusion that would result to their own status

and that of their children and children's children in our own and other nations of the world is inestimable."

The expression of this thought today is as unfair as the fear which is its moving power is baseless.

The expression of the thought is unfair, because it denies kinship with our suffering brethren in Europe and combats the one movement that would offer a permanent solution to their suffering. It is essentially selfish and immoral, in that it aims to insure a secure status for Jews in democratic lands at the cost of turning our backs on the misery of Jews for whom Eretz Yisrael offers hope and life.

But more than that, the fear which gives birth to this selfish, escapist philosophy is without foundation. The nations of the world which favored the establishment of a Jewish National Home in Palestine stated clearly their belief that it would *not* prejudice the status of Jews in other lands, by writing the Balfour Declaration into the Mandate: "It being clearly understood that nothing shall be done which may prejudice . . . the rights and political status enjoyed by Jews in any other country." Thus in democratic lands, what democracies consider "inalienable rights" cannot be jeopardized by a Jewish Commonwealth. And in lands where anti-Semitism reaches the point of state policy, it needs no excuse whatever to deprive Jews of these rights.

Jews in the United States ought to be on guard against the fear implied in the statement of the Louisiana congregation. Its manifestation in a "philosophy" of anti-Zionism is an escape mechanism, a refusal to reckon honestly with the realities of Jewish life. In itself it is a serious spiritual disease, testifying to a deep-seated sense of insecurity. It is not surprising that Jews are subject to insecurity and fear. The cure, however, lies not in escapism. It lies in a normal and dignified acceptance of Judaism in its totality, including the aspiration for a resumption of Jewish national life in Palestine. And it lies in the cultivation of our spiritual heritage, which is capable of giving us strength to face life's difficulties and aiding us in personal self-fulfillment.

JEWISH MUSIC WEEK

THE National Jewish Welfare Board is to be congratulated for its enterprise in organizing the Jewish Music Council for the sponsorship of Jewish Music Week. This year May 20-30 will be observed as Jewish Music Week. We have contended, in season and out, that Jewish life must be understood in terms of a complete civilization, and that, as such, it must express itself in the arts as well as in religion, social organization and ethics. We have repeatedly argued that living as a Jew is an experience, rather than merely an intellectual affirmation, and that, therefore, it must reach out to the emotions and to those senses through which beauty flows to us. We have pleaded, again and again, for a renewal of creativity in the arts, so that our talented young people may find in Judaism a harp for their songs.

The observance of Jewish Music Week, under the aegis of an impressive committee, should go a long way toward reviving an interest in our musical heritage, and toward stimulating the creation of new music. For, after all, musicians compose for audiences. The romantic notion that composers, sitting alone in their studios, are suddenly overcome with the compulsion to write, has long since been exploded. Some of the greatest music ever written was written to order. Many of the greatest paintings have been done by commission; and poetry, too, has

spouted forth—on request. When there is no market, creative artists prefer to leave their art quiescent, because they desire to eat and their art does not provide them with the means.

Thus, while the Music Committee has, as yet, made no specific provisions for the creation of new music, it gives heart to composers by making available music known and thus stimulating its use. The materials issued are not only attractive but useful. Music leaders of clubs, sisterhoods, synagogues, lodges, Zionist groups have now, for the first time, as complete a list as they will need, of the music now extant — for voice and for instruments. They are told where the music can be purchased. Suggestions are even given for effective publicity.

When our centers and schools, our clubs and synagogues begin to use this material, and encourage general musical bodies to use it as well, we shall witness the beginning of a renaissance of our musical life.

REALITIES AND VALUES

THE REPRESENTATIVES OF THE American Jewish Conference and of the American Jewish Committee who are consultants of the United States delegation at the San Francisco Conference do not work in concert. The lack of a unified representation has aroused grave apprehensions that the two organizations would work at cross-purposes to the frustration of both. So far, however, that has not happened. In regard to the problem of Palestine, on the ultimate future of which they hold widely variant viewpoints, they both presented memoranda to the U. S. delegation insisting that no action taken on international trusteeships shall jeopardize the rights already granted to Jews in respect to Palestine by previous international action. The Conference memorandum asks that "nothing shall be included which would be inconsistent with or prejudicial to the special rights of the Jewish people under the Balfour Declaration and the Palestine Mandate." The Committee's statement expresses "accord with the request of the Interim Committee of the American Jewish Conference that it be made affirmatively clear that no action of the San Francisco Conference will work to the prejudice of existing rights of the Jews in respect to Palestine, or to the prejudice of the existing rights of Jews to immigrate to Palestine."

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FOR JEWS THE TRIUMPH achieved in the unconditional surrender of the archenemy of the Jewish people, is tempered by the fearful losses suffered at his hands. In a book by Dr. Max Gottschalk and Abraham G. Duker, "Jews in the Post-War World," issued by the Research Institute of the American Jewish Committee, it is stated that 4,000-,000 Jews have been exterminated in the present war, reducing the total Jewish population of the world by almost a quarter, from 16,717,000 in 1938 to a little over 12,000,000 today. That is much more proportionately than any other people has suffered. Added to the fact that, according to the same book, "almost two-thirds of the entire Jewish population of the world are in the lowest depth of the direst catastrophe that has befallen them in history" such loss of man-power is a serious menace to our survival. Had it not been for the Jewish national home in Palestine, most of the 355,000 Jews, who found a refuge there since the beginning of the Hitler regime in 1933 would have swelled further the list of Jewish casualties. One cannot but reflect bitterly on how many more might have been saved had not Great Britain, through the infamous White Paper, shut

the doors of Palestine to further Jewish immigration. We Jews must now close our ranks and fight for our rights, especially for our rights in respect to Palestine.

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FIVE HUNDRED JEWISH BOY-scouts were enthusiastically cheered as they marched down the Champs Elysees of Paris in a procession of some 35,000 scouts. We are told that the Jewish scouts, headed by Captain Robert Gamzon, rescued 2,000 children during the German occupation, issued 25,000 false identification papers and formed a Jewish maquis unit which, in battles with the Germans, lost 40 killed and 80 captured and deported. Apparently there is more to scouting, at least in France, than tying knots and practicing Indian woodcraft.

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RABBI MAURICE N. EISENdrath, director of the Union of American Hebrew Congregations, the Reform wing of the synagogue, recently made some interesting observations which were widely publicized in the press. He noted "radical departures from Orthodoxy being accepted by the boys (in the armed services) as a matter of course." He also noted "definite changes" in Reform, including a veering away from its former anti-Zionist position. He called attention to the sort of "compromise service" evolved in the army which "may influence future Jewish worship in America." We believe that these observations are accurate and significant. They point to what Reconstructionists have always contended, that the real issues in Jewish life today are not expressed by the conventional denominational labels, which have lost most of their meaning. We hope that the necessity of adjusting religious services to the needs of congregations which do not conform to any standardized type may lead to a fresh study of the significance of Jewish worship, and to new efforts to make that worship a sincere expression of the religious sentiments and convictions of the congregation. To congregations who are moved by this purpose, we earnestly recommend a study of the Sabbath Prayer Book just published by the Jewish Reconstructionist Foundation.

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THE MAY 4TH ISSUE OF THE *Congress Weekly* contains an interesting item on anti-Semitism in Ridgewood, N. J. Real estate owners have created a virtual ghetto there by excluding Jews from the more desirable sections by a "gentlemen's agreement." Recently the Board of Realtors substituted a written "Code of Ethics" for the "gentlemen's agreement." It includes this sentence: "A realtor should never be instrumental in introducing to a neighborhood . . . members of any race or nationality, or any individuals whose presence will clearly be detrimental to property values in that neighborhood." The realtors of Ridgewood thus shamelessly put property rights above human rights; yet they call their code a "Code of Ethics."

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THE JEWISH COMMUNITY Center of Johnstown, Pa., recently asked and obtained permission to use the Reconstructionist seal on an issue of its bulletin which was devoted mainly to the problem of Jewish community organization. This, of course, does not mean that the members of that organization are committed to Reconstructionism. But it does mean that the "over-all program" of Reconstructionism is gaining recognition as affording the soundest basis for unity in Jewish communal life. That program, as symbolized by the seal, recognizes the centrality of Palestine, the necessity of linking Diaspora Jewry with Palestine through religious, ethical and cultural ties, and the need for Jewish participation in American life.

God and Man

By LEO TREPP

IN times of stress our faith is put to the test. We have to affirm not only *that* we believe, but the ideas and ideals in which we believe as well. At great historical moments people give evidence of their faith, sometimes without even wishing to do so, for at such moments the hidden streams of emotions break forth and carry the individual with them. The emotions of our people reached a very high point on D-Day; they reached a new high on V-E Day; and they will be carried to their supreme climax on the day when the final victory over *all* our enemies will be announced.

It might be worthwhile, therefore, to inquire into the religious expression which these emotions found on D-Day, to analyze the worshipers' trend of mind as well as their form of prayer. For in these expressions we may recognize the innermost thoughts of man, which usually are hidden.

Prayers on D-Day

D-Day found men praying to God, and praying to Him not merely as to the Power in us and in society who can give us courage; they prayed to Him as to a partner in a dialogue, who was facing them, listening, answering and omnipotent. And this omnipotence actually included for them His power to save and to guard, to clothe His children individually in the bullet-proof vest of His protection, to give victory as by a miracle and to lead to success.

Thus I found people praying, and thus I found myself praying, not only in those great moments, but in all the great emergencies of life. All philosophical speculation as to God's essence and man's relationship to Him slips down like a mantle from man's shoulder. And though one may well know the insignificance of individual needs as compared with God's greatness, one still derives courage and strength from the "magic" prayer: "O God, help now; O God, let me succeed."

On D-Day philosophers became childlike in their faith, cynics became reverent, and men of doubt affirmed. How could it happen? The only possible explanation is that none of us has one and the same idea of God at all times, that our conception of Him changes with the times and the circumstances in which we find ourselves. God actually reveals Himself in different ways not only to different people but to the same person as well on different occasions.

The Names of God

What we actually do, when we approach God in different ways, is to give God's ineffable being a name, or names expressing our relationship to Him at given moments. The various names of God which we find in the Scripture have been thus understood. Therefore any name which the individual gives to his God to express God's majesty and to invoke Him for purposes of communion becomes legitimate. While theology can adequately define God's essence only in negative terms, the names given Him in spontaneous prayer translate a part of God's being into terms of human understanding.

Basically there seem to be four ways in which this relationship expresses itself and four "names" which express this relationship: The God of the mystic, the God of the philosopher, the God of the child, and the God of the egoist.

For the mystic, the wall of the name and the wall of human personality break down. The human being dissolves itself in God in a nameless communion. As there are few mystics in our world, we need not concern ourselves with the details of this relationship beyond stating that almost every human being has these mystic moments in his life.

The philosopher understands God in logical or sociological terms. In ages past he used to "prove" Him in various ways. This actually means that he gave God various names by which the human intellect could grasp him, and the fact that medieval thinkers usually had various proofs for God, indicates that they thought of Him in different ways at different times. Modern religious philosophy has conceived of God as the Power that makes for good in human society, this then has become His name for us.

The average man sees God as his father, as a Person, great and powerful. This is the approach of the child and it is personal.

The egoist, however, sees God as his servant who has to do his bidding, has to be at his exclusive call and serve his exclusive ends. This approach is the one which is dangerous.

The philosopher's God and the child's God, these are the names most commonly used by man. Both ideas are usually present in the minds of most men. God the "Father" prevents the philosopher from losing himself in pantheism and the philosopher's God prevents the child from becoming an egoist. After all, it is philosophical thinking which has established God's infinite greatness in the minds of man.

The experience of the individual is thus the basic element in his perception of God. The Zohar states this idea very clearly; God has many faces in which He reveals himself to man. One face is radiant and one is not radiant; one is humble and one is exalted; one is remote and one is near; one looks towards the right, one towards the left. For God reveals Himself to every human being in accordance with man's ability to understand Him.

The God of the Bible: "And Thou Shalt Love!"

The God of the Bible is the philosopher's God and the God of the child, with the emphasis on the latter. "I am that I am" establishes the philosophical name; the command: "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God," establishes Him as Father. And, by its very central place in the system of Judaism, this purely personal relationship between God and man is put at the center of ideas. Love calls for a lover, but it calls for a beloved one as well. Love without a personal lover and a personal beloved remains an abstraction in human life. True, there are various forms of love, but in all of them there is a personal relationship. The child loves his mother for the gifts he receives; husband and wife love each other for the privilege of giving and taking and thus of growing through mutual relationship; a mother's love for her child is the sacrificial love which finds its reward in self-denial for the sake of another life. All these are personal relationships.

The other forms of love remain unsatisfactory in comparison with these. No nation has ever succeeded in creating a direct relationship of love between the individual and its collective being. Thus nations resorted to symbols and persons through which this love could be channelled and developed: flag, king, or, as for America, the Constitution, which is as much a symbol as an instrument of democracy.

It is only the personal God who will

allow us to love Him fully and to address Him in prayer as "my God," as the Psalmist does. The approach might be that of a child, the importunate prayer of one who wishes to receive favors, or that of lover and beloved by which a mutual relationship is created, or that, highest of all, the prayer of the martyr who is willing to die *al kiddush hashem,* for the sanctification of God's name.

But only in seeing God with the eyes of lover and beloved can man rise to sing his "Song of Songs" which thus—as Rabbi Akiba once said,—becomes the holiest book in the canon of the Scriptures.

Without the philosopher's name of God love may, however, turn easily into egoism. Thus the generation of the desert was a great generation in their love of God, a generation in which, according to rabbinic lore, any maid servant beheld God as no prophet has since beheld Him. Yet it was a bad generation, for the Israelites of that day were spoilt to the point of making God their errand-boy. To paraphrase an ancient *midrash,* He carried them on His shoulders, yet, when they had new demands to make on His generosity, they questioned where He was.

The God of the philosopher is established in His greatness and unmistakably so. He is the master. But he is too remote; He cannot be loved. Only a personal approach will lead to this love. The God of the child, however, lacks the element of "fear." Both therefore have to be combined.

The Personal God in Modern Thought: Kierkegaard

It is highly significant for our times that the teachings of the Danish philosopher Kierkegaard are slowly gaining in influence on contemporary thought. These ideas were laid down a hundred years ago and their strength has since been tested in the lives of Kierkegaard's countrymen.

Kierkegaard's God again is the personal God, exclusive and "jealous." For to love God, according to Kierkegaard, means to abandon the entire world for that love. Man has to stand alone, completely alone before God; only thus can he reach Him and converse with Him. God is not loved through humanity but against humanity. And Kierkegaard dissolved his own engagement with the girl he loved for the exclusive love of God. Nothing could more poignantly reveal the personal character of his conception of God.

This thought is not compatible with Jewish thinking. For us, God is the Lord of humanity, and is served through righteousness. To love one's neighbor is, according to Hillel, the foundation of our faith, our fundamental approach to God. Nevertheless there is greatness in the conception which Kierkegaard holds, as has been demonstrated by the events of our day.

For he who loves God in this way knows well that he cannot hide from Him, that he is always alone before Him, alone with his responsibility towards Him. He cannot claim that force of circumstances prevented him from doing his duty. He cannot hide in the mass, nor even cite mass-influence as his excuse if he has failed. For he has to stand alone. To be in the mass and with the mass, this in itself, according to Kierkegaard, is sin. It might have been this principle which gave the Danes the strength to preserve and defend their spiritual integrity against the onslaught of the Germans, and to do so in a way which is unique. We only have to consider the way in which they rescued the Jews to find a shining example of this sense of responsibility which every one felt

toward God before whom he had to stand alone.

Such is the power of the personal God in human life and human history, and the fact that Kierkegaard's ideas are asserting themselves here and now, gives us something to think about.

The Lesson of War Time Religion

War time experience has taught us a significant lesson in this connection. It has shown us that one of the most important premises on which modern religion has based its system is due for re-examination. This premise is that man will not acknowledge a personal God who participates as a partner in his life. Modern religion has based its reforms on the assumption that this conception of God is so narrow that it has driven progressive minds away from ancient forms and beliefs. This assumption may stand in need of re-examination in the light of our religious experience during the war.

Apparently, it was not the institutional fault of organized religion which drove our modern man away from it. The spontaneity with which prayers to the personal God broke out on D-Day, for example, seems to indicate that the idea of the personal God is not a dogma set by religion but a reality founded on the human soul itself. Thus it must have been man's belief in his own self-sufficiency which drove man away from God; and the ancient conception, far from being obsolete, is still dormant in the minds of men, to come to the fore whenever they feel that they have exhausted their own resources.

The Danger and the Task

If it was man's belief in his own strength, however, which drove him away from God and if only the knowledge of his weakness can bring him back to this God, then this return may be prompted by motives which give reason for apprehension. Men may have called on God to do the work which they could not do and to do only that. They may indeed have conceived him as their servant. All their prayers may have been those of egoists. God has not only to be approached for personal ends but has, also, to be acknowledged as the Master of humanity for the salvation of mankind. For only the salvation of all can help the individual in his own needs.

The remote God of the philosopher was forgotten in the emotion of D-Day. But what about the supreme God of the philosopher, was he forgotten too? The idea of a personal relationship between God and man is a potent power in the life of our people, and it brings man closer to God than the philosopher can lead him. But without the philosopher's God man will be led astray. His faith may become a blasphemy in the fullest sense of the word, with all its ugly implications for social life.

It should become our task, therefore, to revitalize the conception of the personal God, since it has proven so powerful in the minds of the people and thus is a mighty instrument for the promotion of the good in society. At the same time, however, man has to be led towards a true philosophical conception of God, which alone can prevent the danger of our becoming egoists. The synthesis of both will lead to the adoption of a God idea which will have warmth and emotional appeal and which will, at the same time, lead man onward in unselfish devotion to society and the good of mankind.

Ritual in the Jewish Home

By JACK J. COHEN

THE widening areas of human interest have weakened, rather than strengthened, the ties which formerly bound together the members of the average family. Logically, the expanding horizon of human activity should have helped to enrich family life. It should have provided the home with a greater number of experiences to share in common. The opposite, however, has occurred. More and more has the home become merely a place where people eat and sleep, and where the individual shares fewer and fewer experiences with the other members of the household.

To assign causes for this sociological phenomenon would necessitate a thoroughgoing analysis of our contemporary material and spiritual culture. The impact of technological advances, population migrations, social unrest, the improvement of educational and cultural facilities, the conflict between immigrant parents and their American born children, cultural lags — all these, and more, enter into the picture. The family cannot be isolated from its environment.

The Value of Ritual for Family Life

Among the factors which such a study would necessarily include is ritual. Particularly is this true of Jewish family life. Even a cursory examination of the history of the Jewish family reveals the organic relation between its cohesiveness and Jewish home ritual. A large proportion of family experience consisted of home ceremonials conducted daily throughout the year. Praying, washing, eating, dressing, relaxing — all were focused around rituals in which the members of the group participated. But as ritual has fallen off, the influence of the family has declined proportionately. This does not mean that the decline in ritual is the one cause of the weakening of family influence, but that there is an organic relationship between home ritual and a rich family life. The same factors which have weakened the influence of the family have also weakened ritual in the home.

But, given the opportunity, ritual has a binding power which the common interests (political, economic, social, esthetic, intellectual, etc.) of the present day family can never hope to attain. These interests cannot serve to strengthen family ties to any extent because they fail to result in joint activity and participation by the family group as a unit. And where such concerns do lead to shared experiences, they are frequently limited in scope. Rather than broaden the perspective of the family, they often narrow it by intensifying the family's preoccupation with some particular area of interest.

Ritual, on the other hand, because it consists of planned ceremonials designed to inculcate the highest values of the social entity to which the family belongs offers a number of advantages. In the first place, it has the force of habit. The constant repetition of a group ceremony helps to keep awake in the mind of its performer the idea which it is meant to symbolize and also helps to strengthen his emotional tie to those who participate with him in its performance. The Sabbath meal and the Passover Seder have been outstanding example of these positive values of ritual habit.

Secondly, ritual, insofar as it embodies general principles of human conduct, constantly reminds us that the family is not self-sufficient. The source of its sus-

tenance, both physical and spiritual, is again and again traced to humanity as a whole and to those powers in humanity and nature which we call God. A family which observes ritual consciously and conscientiously is likely to consist of humble and grateful individuals.

And thirdly, the inherent beauty of the ceremonials serves to set standards of esthetic appreciation. Music, art, even the dance, can receive their initial impulse at the family hearth. As a matter of fact, it was the Jewish home which produced many of the treasures which we now possess in these art forms. The Sabbath *zemirot,* the illuminated *haggadot,* the folk dances, all stem to a large extent from home ceremonials.

The Need for Innovation in Ritual

Any strengthening and enrichment of family ties, therefore, ought to consider the possibilities inherent in ritual. We cannot, however, expect to be satisfied with an attempt merely to revive old customs. The latter, while still possessing many virtues, require numerous changes before they can be made serviceable in the modern Jewish community. Moreover, serious consideration must be given to the introduction of new ceremonials built around recent physical, intellectual and spiritual experiences of our people.

These last suggestions obviously bespeak a point of view which runs counter to the traditional approach toward ritual. The latter has discouraged, directly through its prohibition of change and indirectly through its emphasis on the authority of tradition, alteration of established custom. Any additions which have been made were rarely the result of a conscious, creative urge on the part of the people. The Reconstructionist approach views ritual as an opportunity, not only for devoted adherence to worthwhile religious habits of the Jewish people, but also for creative self-expression on the part of the individual Jew. The motivation for the performance of a ritual must come primarily from within, from the desire to express an ideal or an emotion in forms characteristic of one's group. The group in turn, must permit sufficient elasticity of observance to allow for expressions of individual initiative. The difference between the traditional and Reconstructionist approaches may thus best be summarized by calling attention to the peremptory character of the *mitzvot* when conceived as commandments and their voluntary character when conceived as folkways. Although the traditional *mitzvot* originated, for the most part, as expressions of folk experiences and feeling, their being given the force of law removed them from the realm of acts subject to conscious change. If we are to raise ritual once more to its rightful place in the home, this legal authoritarianism must be replaced by a rationale of folk usage. Home observances must then be subject to critical examination and experiment.

The opportunities for introducing meaningful rituals into the Jewish home are many. Fortunately, despite our criticism of tradition, the pattern which it has passed on to us still possesses sufficient vitality to serve as the basis for most suggestions.

The Sabbath in the Home

The Sabbath is still the focal point of all Jewish ritual. Long after many other ceremonial details have vanished from the Jewish home, the family dinner on Sabbath eve has maintained its hold. Here is the logical starting place for the revitalization of ritual.

The following suggestions are offered: In accord with tradition, the appearance of the home on Friday evening should

signalize the advent of a day different from the average weekday. It is at the supper table where this difference can be most apparent. Floral decorations, special silverware (where the family can afford it), artistic candelabra and especially fine candles can provide the physical setting. Wherever possible, this setting should consist of Palestinian or other Jewish art and household products.

The lighting of candles should be performed by both the mother and daughters who have reached Bat Mitzvah age. Similarly, the chanting of the Kiddush ought not to be the sole prerogative of the master of the house, but should be done by him in conjunction with sons who have become Bar Mitzvah. The *motzi* might be a group prayer, recited in unison. Younger children should also be provided with adequate parts in the service. Perhaps a paragraph in the *birkath hamazon* or participation in one of the special readings to be suggested would be adequate.

Thus far the suggestions have been directed toward implementation of traditional procedures. However, material must be prepared for both Hebrew speaking and non - Hebrew speaking homes which will refresh the traditional content of the *kiddush* and grace after meals. A Sabbath book, containing, among other things, special Hebrew and English readings to be used as supplements to or as substitutes for the traditional prayers (according to the particular viewpoint of the family) is a necessity. Where traditional prayers are unacceptable, a *kiddush* revolving around the conception of the Sabbath and a grace including recognition of the human efforts which go into supplying food, ought to be composed. The book ought to provide also an adequate selection of readings on Jewish history, heroes, ideas, etc., as well as *zemirot*. These readings could be interspersed between courses, or at the completion of the meal, as the family sees fit. From a practical standpoint, some sort of a loose leaf book to which new material might be added from time to time would be advisable.

The Sabbath table, therefore, can set the pattern for all meal time rituals in the Jewish home. The primary need at the present moment is the preparation of adequate content material in forms cheap enough to insure widespread distribution and use. Until such content is prepared, initiative might be employed by those with sufficient interest in selecting special readings from personal libraries.

Inviting guests always helps to create a festive atmosphere and lends enhanced meaning to any discussion or reading which the family undertakes. The Sabbath tradition of family get-togethers and of having guests at the table should be followed.

On Sabbath night, the *havdalah,* ceremony offers great possibility in terms of the beauty of the candles, the wine cup and the spice box. The ceremony might, from time to time, be expanded in the form of an *Oneg Shabbat* or *Melavveh Malkah* to include a musical concert, singing, special Bible readings. Part of the ceremony might conclude dropping a coin in the J.N.F. box after *havdalah,* a procedure which might also precede the lighting of the candles on Sabbath eves.

Jewish Holidays in the Home

As has been stated, the meal affords the most practical locale for introducing ritual. This applies to holiday occasions as well as to the Sabbath.

Several holidays already have had special dishes associated with them. *Latkes* for Hanukkah, Palestinian fruits for *Hamisha Asar Bi-Shevat, Hamen-*

taschen for Purim, Matzos and the various symbolic foods for Passover, milk dishes for Shavuot—all these have added distinctiveness to the holiday occasions. Mothers should develop the habit of serving these dishes at the appropriate holiday meals. The Jewish school could be of great assistance in arranging girls' cooking classes whose purpose it would be to teach adolescent girls how to prepare these special foods.

Table ceremonies on holiday occasions could follow the general pattern described in our discussion on the Sabbath. Kiddush, Grace before and after meals, and readings suitable to the significance of the holidays form an adequate basis for the ritual. Readings ought to refer to the historical and ideological foundations of the holidays and should include also selections from literature inspired by them. The Passover Seder requires too great an expenditure of energy on the part of the housewife to be duplicated at any other time of the year. Therefore, table ceremonies will, of necessity, have to be more simplified.

Distinctive decorations and symbolic acts should be prepared for each holiday. On Rosh Hashanah, the hanging of a beautifully illustrated new Jewish calendar might serve as the central ritual, to be followed by the traditional dipping of bread in honey. Rosh Hashanah is an appropriate occasion also to reintroduce the practice of purchasing new clothes for members of the household. The entire atmosphere of the home should be one of freshness.

On Yom Kippur an attempt might be made to create an atmosphere of solemnity. Simplicity and dignity should be the keynote of table decorations. On returning from the synagogue after Kol Nidre, the use of candle light could add effectiveness to any serious discussion of intimate family affairs that might be undertaken or to the telling of some of the fine Hasidic stories concerning Yom Kippur. It would also create a good atmosphere for the playing of introspective music, which some families might prefer.

Sukkoth should be highlighted by the joint building of a Sukkah. However, where it is impossible to do so, as for example, where the family lives in an apartment house, decorating the dining room with fruits or making a miniature Sukkah as a table decoration would be a fine project. In many Jewish schools, children make Sukkot in their arts and crafts classes. These should be brought home for use at the table. The synagogue, as soon as war conditions permit, should encourage in every way possible the purchase and use of the *lulav* and *etrog*. Many people who would introduce these symbols into the home fail to do so simply because of the difficulty entailed in securing them. It is the task of a synagogue committee to make such materials easily available.

Hanukkah contains many possibilities, not fully realized. Particularly has the custom of exchange of gifts not been adequately followed. The lighting of the first candle might be a propitious time for this act, or as is already the custom in many homes, gifts might be given to the children each night of the holiday. (Inasmuch as Hanukkah stresses the conquest of the spirit over armed might, it might be advisable to have Jewish Book Month overlap at some point with the Hanukkah season, and have the purchase of books as gifts at this time become an established tradition.) The failure to further the tradition of festive meals during Hanukkah has taken away much of the spirit of the holiday. Some of this spirit can be recaptured by introducing Hanukkah parties, featured by family preparation of *latkes* and by the introduction of Hanukkah melodies and story

material at the table. Some new games ought also to be devised to supplement the traditional *dreidel* games.

Hamisha Asar Bi-Shevat can become more than an occasion for eating Palestinian fruit. There is as yet no single holiday in the calendar which concentrates on the role of Palestine in Jewish life. Adequate textual and musical materials to highlight this idea must be prepared, for use at the holiday meal and after. In addition, a special effort to purchase *totzeret haaretz* could be made at this time of the year. Where a family can afford it, Palestinian movies might be shown in the home. Where this is impossible, Zionist districts could perform a great service by arranging Palestine celebrations for the family.

The height of jollity should be assured on Purim. Costumes would increase the interest of the children in the Purim meal. Incidentally, the ability of parents to lose some of their adult dignity on occasion would go a long way towards helping to build positive Jewish attitudes out of the play instinct of their children.

The further development of the Passover ritual has already been begun by the Reconstructionist movement through the New Haggadah. Needless to say, further experimentation along these lines would be most welcome. As regards the dietary regulations, all Jewish homes can easily follow the positive requirements, such as eating *matzot*. Thus even though some families may rebel at the negative restrictions (special set of dishes, no *hametz*, etc.), they ought not be deterred from creating the minimum Passover atmosphere, such as can be assured by eating *matzot*.

Lag Ba'Omer should feature the outdoors and contact with natural surroundings. Family picnics would supply the best method.

Shavuot has not been adequately tapped as a source for home ritual. The home ought to be decorated in much the same way as the synagogue. Floral decorations are often impractical because of their expense, but greens of all kinds are frequently available. In any case, some attempt ought to be made at beautifying the home with plant life. As far as ritual is concerned, the Bible should occupy a central position, in terms of selected readings from the Bible text and from writings about the book.

During the summer months, some effort ought to be made at more adequate recognition of *Tisha B'Av* in the home. Perhaps a further development of the Palestine idea could be made. *Hamisha Asar Bi-Shevat* might be used to concentrate on the positive achievements of the modern Yishuv, while *Tisha B'Av* could present a picture of the history of Palestine's past. All such material should be viewed from the standpoint of their use either at the meal table or at family gatherings following the meal.

American Holidays in the Jewish Home

There is a vast field for creative Jewish expression in the addition of rituals revolving around American holidays.

One of the best examples of this is Thanksgiving. The Thanksgiving meal could be made deeply significant by the creation of an "American Haggadah," which could supply an account of the Jewish influence on American ideals and history, as well as readings relevant to the general spiritual significance of the occasion.

Similarly, other American and secular holidays such as the birthdays of Lincoln and Washington, Decoration Day, Independence Day, Labor Day, etc., supply ample inspiration for rituals of all kinds, which will illustrate the embodiment of

Jewish ideals in American institutions. Similarly, a reciprocal relation might be established between the American and Jewish backgrounds of the American Jew by introducing some of the spiritual significance of American holidays into the ritual of purely Jewish holidays. For example, the conceptions of freedom developed in the Passover ritual might profitably be broadened by the inclusion of lessons and texts from American history —especially when the latter bear on the Jewish position in this country.

In order to implement some of these suggestions, it is necessary to enlist the cooperation of the synagogue and school. Part of the difficulty involved in instituting ritual in the home is the fact that so many individuals do not know what procedures to follow. It would be advisable for Sisterhoods and Men's Clubs to sponsor projects designed to inform their members as to proper ritual procedures. Needless to say, the school, through its parent-teacher associations, could be a most effective instrument for this purpose.

The Voice Unheard at Yalta *

By FRIEDA C. HYMAN

Come seek us, world.
Look well, for not so easily found are we.
See here in this bar of soap,
This dynamite,
This golden coin stained rusty-red,
'Tis we you see, or what is left of us.
Nay, turn not your head aside, good world.
We, not you, are here.
The lime-kilns work efficiently.

But death's the same wherever shame's its chief attendant.
See, here in these blue-green waters of the sea that rest against our natal land,
Here, where our mother, bound fast with paper chains of treachery,
In anguish watched,
The while the Struma fed us to the emerald bay.
(Nay, no Nazi captained her.)
But we are here.
Look well,
Here, here in these fat and fleshy fish
That dart contentedly . . . and patiently.

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* This poem was written immediately after the Yalta Conference. Unhappily, it has not lost its timeliness.

Come, come, you are too squeamish, world.
Or is the seeing harder than the doing?
You must tell us, world.
We do not know.

You must answer us, world,
In plain and simple speech.
In speech so plain, you, too, will understand.

Beware you speak no words of pity.
More than the stench of our own burning flesh
Your compassion offends.
Nor perished we in Warsaw so you might shed a tear.
This luxury of sighs and sobs is not for you.

Neither do we desire terms of love.
Spare us Brotherhoods and Fatherhoods.
Such concepts are too hard for you.
This we know.
Three thousand years we taught you them
And you are still untaught.

Confine yourself to what your atom-smashing mind can understand:
Two plus two make four
And murder gone unheeded threatens all.
Threatens even you.
This you know.
It is frozen in your marbled courts,
Nailed into your scaffold's wood.

Then tell us, world,
Five million of us dead but not at rest
(Nay not even in a bar of soap):

On judgment day,
Will you tally true and right this fearful score?
Will you remove the mailed fist from our shore?
Nor bar the way of Zion's sons to Zion's door?

For justice-sake
Will you remember us?
Answer no or yes.

And know
That by your no or yes
You stand condemned
Or saved.

Book Notes

THE PHILOSOPHY OF WILLIAM JAMES REEXAMINED

IN COMMEMORATION OF WILLIAM JAMES, edited by Blanshard and Schneider, Columbia University Press.

In 1942, philosophers met to celebrate the hundredth anniversary of the birth of William James. Naturally, as at all celebrations, the cause and the man were extolled and praised, and for good reason. For rarely if ever, was a thinker as beloved, rarely if ever, was a teacher of philosophy as open-minded, as humble as William James. Even after a momentary glance at the various papers delivered in 1942, we are struck by the immense number of personal desirable qualities possessed by that great innovator. Holt refers to his candor, honesty, open-mindedness; Morris to his Promethean qualities; Kallen to his genius for the flashing phrase; Henry James to his father's care and genius as an author. To use a phrase loved by James himself—he was a "*ganzer mensch.*" It would be pleasant, drawing from Perry's great biography and studies by Santayana and Miller, to retell many significant anecdotes, but one must hurry along, for James's significance lies primarily as a philosopher, a thinker.

Greatest among the innovations introduced by James into philosophical thought was the denial that experience commences with sense-data. He affirmed that the latter are derivative and demonstrated that relations as well as sensations are experienced. He thus saw the strength of the idealistic critique of Hume's empiricism without being mislead into accepting the Absolute of the Idealists. It would be erroneous to conclude that, thus baldly stated, this offers more than a program — but it offers one that, even at this late date, has not been understood by many thinkers. But James was more than a navigator, he was a pilot as well. He is to be credited with many positive demonstrations, some of which are developed in the essays. Holt reminds us that James concluded that the substantial soul explained nothing and guaranteed nothing; that consciousness as a distinct entity does not exist. Miller is impressed with the famous pages in *The Principles* which swept away the arguments for unfelt bits of mindstuff, which proved that the being of consciousness is to be experienced. Above all, as we are reminded by Bitler, Kantor, and Dewey, his basic contribution to psychology was the conception that psychic processes were fundamentally integrated with biological events.

2

Today it is taken as axiomatic that the *Principles of Psychology* was the greatest work produced by James. But as is so well known, James was tremendously interested throughout his life in questions of religion, morality and, in the latter part of his life, metaphysics. It is comparatively easy to demonstrate that some of his arguments in these spheres are either without significance or lacking in vigorous logic. But—and this is important—interpreted as hypotheses, as leading principles, as sign-posts, these Jamesian principles can still be studied with profit.

Rarely is man gifted enough to see the

world through his own eyes. Usually we see with the eyes of the past masters. Today, when some philosophers look upon the world arena and announce its temporalism, its pluralism, its real ends and real beginnings, the voice is theirs, but the eyes are James's. At least the great big words—totality, the Absolute, the One, have lost their honorific status.

But, James saw more in the world —saw things many of us today do not see. Moreover, we do not know if anything can be found, if we look according to his directions. For toward the end of his life, James was attempting to portray the nature of the external world, based on the nature of our states of consciousness. If this is true, James could be interpreted either as a Whiteheadean who finds "feelings" in stones and sticks or a Bergsonian insisting on vision, inner absorption, in order really to know the nature of things. At least one contributor, Lowe, sees James as a forerunner of Whitehead, another, Bixler, is impressed with talk of absorption, and still another, Miller, sees James as a possible pan-psychist. But one must not be dogmatic. Lovejoy proved long ago that James had not finally made up his mind in regard to the entire problem of the "interpenetration" of events, and Kallen demonstrated the differences between James and Bergson. If, however, James is misinterpreted, he himself, or perhaps, the tooth of time, is to be blamed, for his last two important works, *Essays in Radical Empiricism* and *A Pluralistic Universe,* do not form an integrated system. He devoted many years to be sure, to an analysis of these doctrines, but his death in 1910 prevented consistent development in the face of criticism. Furthermore, no one can fail to remember the tentativeness of James's statements in the last works; no one can fail to remember that his actual problem was not metaphysics but the relation of logic to ontology; and his most "metaphysical" view was the suggestion that we may all be part of a greater consciousness. That latter suggestion proves James more "tender-minded" than most pragmatists.

3

If the chief drawbacks to the volume are the lack of an appraisal of the notions of truth and religion in the philosophy of James, these are compensated by the presence of articles by Bixler and Schneider on James as a moralist, articles which do more than repeat the obvious. But even the obvious about James's views bears repetition. His insistence on individualism and the need for heroic action seem to be a reflex of the American frontier, and rather vague as a program for action in the light of the growth of present collectivism. Vague but nevertheless congent were his warnings against American imperialism and his affirmation of the right to be left alone. In the light of contemporary happenings in the Jewish field, let us not forget this sentence: "The bigger the unit you deal with, the hollower, the more brutal, the more mendacious is the life displayed."

James's vision as a moralist was often greater than his discourse. As Bixler demonstrates he left room for experiences such as the mystic and aesthetic, though he could not prove them valuable on a survival basis—his criterion for the good. Schneider shows the contributions of Goethe, Darwin and Pierce to James's conclusion that individual sentient and emotional beings are confronted with issues which are great, apart from their logical conclusion. He then points out that, though these notions can lead to a social theory of obligation, they were the last gasp of an idealistic transcendentalism.

4

Rather than appraise the individual contributions to this volume, we shall conclude with the contributor's appraisal of James. As a personality perhaps all would agree that James was a "consummate and unique being" (R. B. Perry's phrase); as a philosopher, his greatness consists in the reinterpretation of the knowledge process (D. Williams, Dewey, Hill); as a moralist, in his insistence on freedom (Kallen). But there are many limitations in James's teachings, some superficial, and some significant. The superficial are often due to the tricks of language. Thus D. Williams rather cogently proves that, though James often insisted that it was "impudent slander" to state his views as a belief that whatever is pleasant is true, he did often express himself in just that manner. The more significant are due to the very structure of James's thought. His psychology, as Kantor demonstrates, is more dualistic and less objective than contemporary teachings demand. He failed, as Morris contends, to differentiate between the cognitive and the aesthetic. He failed to—but why continue; all mortals are limited.

James has little to contribute to many of the issues in contemporary philosophy such as the criteria of meaning, the nature of time, the foundation of probability. But he would have welcomed this advance. He insisted that the "philosophy of the future must imitate the sciences in taking them more and more elaborately into account," and then if new conclusions were at hand, conclusions based on the particulars of life, James was willing: "I will say, as I now do say, with the cheerfullest of hearts, 'Ring out, ring out my mournful rhymes, but ring the fuller minstrel in.'"

SIDNEY MORGENBESSER

Correspondence

More on GI Religion

Sirs:

I am impelled by a reading of Chaplain Morris Adler's illuminating article, "The Chaplain and the Rabbi," to write you my own reactions to both his presentation and to my own experiences with similar work.

I should say at the outset that, for the past eight months, I have been acting in the capacity of area director for the National Jewish Welfare Board (USO) for the Utah-Idaho Area, and in this connection have had many experiences parallel to and in some cases different from many Army and Navy Chaplains.

Like Chaplain Adler, I have had many a rude awakening. Probably my first and sharpest was the realization that I was no longer acting in the capacity of a sectarian rabbi. Our services, consequently, consisted of a mixture of Orthodox, Conservative and Reform elements. The over-all impression that I received from all these varying accommodations to the needs and desires of the men was that, above all, I was dealing with *Jewish* soldiers, not men of any one particular theological doctrine. This was, truly, *kelal yisrael,* gathering together from all the four corners of the country.

Chaplain Adler's comments on the fearful lack of time for study and meditation was only too well borne out by my own experience, in more ways than one. Of all the non-Jewish Chaplains I met (there were no Jewish Chaplains in my area for hundreds of miles), only one ever confessed to me that he was able to include some serious reading in his crowded schedule. Jewish Chaplains are certainly no different from their military colleagues in this respect, I am sure, and if anything, may even be worse plagued.

This, then, too, I experienced with Chaplain Adler: that our GI Jew is out of touch with many of the cross-currents of Jewish life. The exceptional few maintain their organizational contacts, continue to read their favorite Jewish or Yiddish magazine or paper. But the vast majority of our men are busy fighting a war, and that's a job in itself. They're busy flying P-47's, or greasing the motors of B-29s; they're making out reports and reading weather charts; they're doing the thousand-and-one little things that keep a man busy, and their interest in Judaism and Jewish current events is often bought at great premium.

Yet I found a great satisfaction in knowing that the men were visibly appreciative of any efforts on their behalf. They wanted to know that the civilian Jewish community was not forgetting them, consigning them to an intellectual and religious valley of darkness, at a time when they wanted inspiration and learn-

ing most. The men whom I serviced were all in isolated spots. Alone out in the wide West, many of them were considerable distances from towns of any size. While they could with ease go to the Base Chaplain, who was either Protestant or Catholic, they mostly preferred to have a rabbi, who understood what *shabbos* meant, to whom they could say *gut shabbos* and have a greeting in return, who was the *symbol* of civilian life, of their Jewish life, and of a possible Jewish future.

In a civilian congregation a rabbi runs the danger of attributing to *kelal yisrael* those habits and characteristics which he finds in his own small group, as Chaplain Adler points out. If he is Reform, he may unconsciously generalize on the nature of "American Jewry"; if his congregation is well-to-do, he may not see the problems of those less well off. So, too, in the Army and Navy, the Chaplain may subtly expand his thinking to include *all* the Jewish men and women. I have used the phrase "GI Jew," but always with tongue in cheek, for I understand how easy it is to generalize on the basis of a small representation. The "GI Jews" to whom my previous references apply, may only constitute one-half or one-third, or maybe less, of the total number of men available. Only at special occasions, such as the High Holidays, Hanukkah and Passover, did the percentage of participation exceed fifty. At regular Friday evening services, if the attendance indicated one-third to one-half, that was considered a good "batting average."

After speaking with several of the non-Jewish Chaplains, I have the feeling that they, too, consider 50 per cent an extraordinarily good figure. I don't think the phrase "There are no atheists in foxholes" can be interpreted to mean that, generally speaking, men in the armed forces are returning to religion. My own experience—and I admit it may not be representative enough—did not show this.

There may be several reasons why attendance at services is not always at a high figure. Most important of these is that those men who have had no contact with peace-time religious institutions and rabbis will carry over those same attitudes and reactions into Army life. Some of the men stayed away, too, because in civilian life they had had contacts with rabbis or religious institutions that were none too pleasant: childhood reactions to authority and drilling, adolescent frustrations, adult rebuffs from established organizations. Many a Jewish GI was surprised enough at seeing me in the pulpit to remark, "Its good to see a young rabbi for a change," meaning "young" not only in point of age but in ideas and expressions too. Of course, we must always consider the number of men who can't attend services because of military duties.

Of the men who *do* come, they, too, have their own reasons. Some honestly come to services because they want to pray. These may be the very Orthodox, to whom the omission of a *shemoneh esreh* in their daily life is a personal tragedy. Or they may be men of varying Conservative-Reform backgrounds, who want to pray, because they did so at home and want to continue while in uniform. Some come because they have nothing else to do on a Friday night. They have seen the latest movie at the post theatre; they can't or don't want to go in to town. Some come because they have a nostalgia for things Jewish. I would say this category would include a larger group of men and women than we would want to believe. Then there are those who come frankly and openly for the *oneg shabbat*: the kosher salami, the pickles, the rye bread, the good Jewish cakes. And some come because they are nagged into it. These are the unwilling backsliders who will rather come to a service than suffer the continuous nagging and pleading of their colleagues or of the Post Chaplain.

Probably at some time or other in his Army career, Chaplain Adler has asked himself the question: Is there a return to religion by men in uniform? Probably every Chaplain asks himself the same question. I know I did. I looked for the answer in the hearts and minds of the men themselves. I spoke to Jewish and non-Jewish Chaplains. I tried to divest myself of the rabbinical cloak and examine the question in frank, bold terms. I think the answer is that the men are not returning to religion, any more than they would if they were civilians. I think, however, that many of the men *are* awakening to a consciousness of being Jewish. They are being made aware also that to be Jewish is no crime, rather a natural fact, just as much as being a Catholic, Methodist, Baptist, Lutheran.

Here, again, of course, we must be careful to avoid generalizations. When we speak of "them," the "Jewish soldier," we cannot include all the roughly 500,000 Jewish men and women in uniform. Every once in a while, the chaplain or rabbi will come up against an officer or enlisted man who will argue *against* holding Friday evening services, *against* requesting special leaves for holidays and festivals, *against* setting the Jewish men aside as a special category.

I would most certainly agree with Chaplain Adler that most Jewish servicemen are "Jews to whom Judaism has not been presented." The challenge facing the rabbis of post-war peacetime will be to present Judaism, as Chaplain Adler suggests, but to present it as an intelligible whole, influencing and being influenced by the world environment.

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